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Message Text

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ACTION PC-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 683

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FOR ACTION DEPUTY DIRECTOR KING FROM SCHNEIDER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID BG
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ZIA'S COMMENTS ON PEACE CORPS

1. DURING MY TALK WITH PRESIDENT ZIA ON SEPT. 7, I RECALLED THE MESSAGE HE HAD CONVEYED TO ME ASKING IF WE COULD KEEP PUBLICITY ABOUT THE PEACE CORPS TO A MINIMUM AND TOLD HIM THAT ACTION DEPUTY DIRECTOR KING HAD ASSURED ME WHILE I WAS IN WASHINGTON THAT WE HAD NO NEED FOR PUBLICITY. I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT THE ELABORATE CEREMONY (AND ENSUING PUBLICITY) AT THE TIME OF THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT WAS THE RESULT OF THE INITIATIVE OF HIS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON.

2. THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH MY RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST AND, BY WAY OF EXPLAINING HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PEACE CORPS, RECITED HIS ANSWER TO A QUESTION CONCERNING IT AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE ON SEPTEMBER 1. AT THAT TIME HE HAD SAID, "MANY WERE TRYING TO GIVE IT (THE PEACE CORPS) A DIFFERENT SHAPE. BUT THE PEACE CORPS WAS A PART OF THE US TECHNICAL AID PROGRAM. THE MEMBERS OF THE PEACE CORPS WOULD WORK ACCORDING TO OUR DIRECTION. IF AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL IT IS PROVED OTHERWISE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD
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TAKE PROPER STEPS."

3. I REMARKED THAT I HAD SEEN IT REPORTED IN THE PRESS THAT HIS SENIOR MINISTER HAD SAID THAT THE PEACE CORPS AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE RATIFIED BY THE NEWLY ELECTED PARLIAMENT. ZIA WAS NONPLUSSED BY THIS STATEMENT AND AFTER SOME HESITATION LOOKED AT FOREIGN MINISTER SHAMSUL

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HUQ, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, AND ASKED HOW THIS QUESTION
SHOULD BE ANSWERED. HUQ WAS SIMILARLY EMBARRASSED AND
AFTER ANOTHER PERIOD OF SILENCE I CLOSED OUT THIS PART
OF THE CONVERSATON BY TELLING THE PRESIDENT THAT WE WOULD
OF COURSE LOOK TO HIM FOR GUIDANCE REGARDING THE PEACE CORPS.

4. COMMENT: ZIA'S PRESS CONFERENCE COMMENTS ARE UNEXCEPTIONAL.
I CONCLUDE FROM HIS UNWILLINGNESS TO EXPLAIN THE SENIOR
MINISTER'S COMMENT, AND FROM FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK
HUSAIN'S EARLIER REMARKS ABOUT A FUTURE REVIEW OF THE
PEACE CORP, THAT SOME COMPROMISE MAY HAVE BEEN REACHED
WITHIN THE CAMBINET ACCORDING TO WHICH A SECOND LOOK AT
THE AGREEMENT WILL BE MADE PRIOR TO THE ARRIVAL OF
VOLUNTEERS. I EMPHASIZE THIS IS ENTIRELY SURMISE ON
MY PART BUT SOMETHING SEEMS TO BE UP.

5. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I BELIEVE WE SHOULD
NONETHELESS PROCEED IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR ORIGINAL
PLANS, KEEPING THE GOVERNMENT FULLY AWARE OF EACH STEP
WE TAKE ALONG THE WAY. AT SOME POINT BEFORE WE COMMIT
RESOURCES TOO HEAVILY.IT MIGHT BE ADVISABLE TO QUERY THE
GOVERNMENT ONCE AGAIN.
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